

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present Reply, claims 25-42 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-24 are cancelled herein without prejudice. The new claims are believed to address both the rejections under Section 112 and Section 103.

New Claims Support

New claim 25 is based on original claims 1, 5 and 8, and further supported at p. 10, last full paragraph and the paragraph bridging to p. 11.

New claim 26 corresponds to original claim 6.

New claim 27 corresponds to original claim 7, and further specifies that the direction in which the cables run is reversed, as supported, e.g., at p. 4, 3rd paragraph.

New claim 28 is supported, e.g., at p. 4, 4th paragraph.

New claim 29 is supported, e.g., at p. 4, 3rd paragraph.

New claim 30 is supported, e.g., at p. 4, 4th paragraph.

New claim 31 is supported, e.g., at p. 4, 3rd paragraph.

New claim 32 corresponds to original claim 12, amended to replace "cavity" with "guide channel".

New claims 33-36 correspond to original claims 14-17.

New claims 37 and 38 correspond to original claims 3 and 4.

New claims 39-41 correspond to original claims 9-11; the at least one side wall forming the guide channel is supported, e.g., in the drawings.

New claim 42 corresponds to original claim 19; the additional features being supported in the drawings.

Rejections Over Prior Art

Claims 1-4 and 24 are rejected as being unpatentable over Tsunoda et al. in view of Hisano. Applicants respectfully disagree and traverse the rejections for at least the following reasons.

The cable guide assembly disclosed by Tsunoda et al. is a commonplace wire harness (cf. Abstract, reference numeral 10) consisting of a cable sheath usually formed of a flexible plastic material wherein the electric cables are accommodated. A flexible cable sheath as disclosed by Tsunoda et al. (cf. column 6, line 66) cannot, however, guide the electric cables accommodated therein. Without an external guiding member, as outlined below, such a flexible cable sheath could be flexed in all directions, including directions that fall out of a plane including the longitudinal direction of the vehicle, contrary to what is claimed by amended claim 1.

Furthermore, Tsunoda et al. is completely silent about forming a guide channel for guiding the cable guide assembly by directly using the inner door skin and/or a door module support and/or the door inside trim. In contrast, Tsunoda et al. discloses use of an additional member, namely the protector 70 and cover 90 shown in Fig. 1. This configuration is, however, complicated and requires additional components which gives rise both to higher costs and to longer assembly time/higher assembly costs. As explicitly mentioned, e.g., at column 6, line 36, according to Tsunoda et al., “the protector 70 is **attached** to an inner panel 2 of the slide door 1”. Thus, assembly of this device also requires additional mounting components and time, and thus increased costs. (Emphasis added.)

Furthermore, it is noted that Tsunoda et al. is completely silent about providing the cable guide assembly with a first section that can move only in the sliding plane including the longitudinal direction of the vehicle and a second section disposed outside of the guide channel and configured such that it is movable or pivotable in a direction transverse to the sliding plane. In contrast, according to Tsunoda et al. the wire harness has to bridge directly the gap between the vehicle body and the slide door, contrary to what is claimed by amended claim 1.

On the other hand, Hisano does not disclose a guide channel in the sense of this application, namely a guide channel “for guiding the cable guide assembly on moving the sliding door”. Such a guidance in the sense of this application requires some sort of limiting function which must be exerted by sidewalls or the like of the guide channel. In

contrast, Fig. 2 of Hisano (cf. reference number 11e) clearly shows that the wire harness 8 is only accommodated but not guided in the recess 11e. For this reason, recess 11e is disclosed in Hisano as a “containing recess” (cf. column 2, line 65), which can anticipate only one function of the guide channel as claimed by amended claim 1, namely the function of “accommodating the cable guide assembly”.

There would be no need to further narrow the width of guide channel 11e according to Hisano, because Hisano relates to a “containing recess” which only has to accommodate the wire harness. Therefore, the person skilled in the art would not consider Hisano as a motivation to further improve the power supply apparatus according to Tsunoda et al.

Even if one would combine the teaching of Tsunoda et al. and Hisano with the further citations, namely Kobayashi et al. and Suzuki et al., the subject matter of the claims would not have been rendered obvious.

With regard to Kobayashi et al. it must be noted that this citation relates to a completely different geometry. All drawings of Kobayashi et al. show **plan views**. Therefore, according to Kobayashi et al., the cable guide assembly is only pivotable in a direction transverse to the sliding plane on displacing the sliding door into the sliding plane, but that does not comprise a first section that is moved only in the sliding plane including the longitudinal direction of the vehicle on moving the sliding door, as claimed.

With regard to Suzuki et al., it is noted that Suzuki et al. is completely silent about use of a guide channel in the sense of this application for limiting a lateral movement of a cable guide assembly. Although Suzuki et al. seems to disclose a cable drag chain in the sense of this application and as claimed by new claim 42, Suzuki et al. is also completely silent about disposing a second section of the cable guide assembly outside of the guide channel.

With regard to new claim 26 (previous claim 6), which refers, e.g., to the embodiment shown in Fig. 3 of this application, it is respectfully noted that none of the citations cited discloses a guide channel which is configured such that a first “end of the cable guide assembly connected to an interface element on the door side is guided in a

top guide section of the guide channel, and wherein an (opposite) end of the cable guide assembly connected to an interface element on the vehicle body side is guided in a **bottom guide section** of the guide channel”, as claimed (emphasis added).

The only citations disclosing some sort of guide channel are Tsunoda et al. and Hisano. However, neither of these citations discloses dividing a guide channel into a top and bottom guide section for guiding a cable guide assembly therein.

New claim 27 (previous claim 7) is also directed, e.g., to the embodiment shown in Fig. 3 of this application and further specifies that the C-shaped turning area (portion) of the cable guide assembly is guided by a middle section (so-called central guide area) between the top and bottom guide section of the guide channel.

New claim 29 is directed, e.g., to the embodiment set forth on page 4, third paragraph of the description, wherein “a front end and rear end respectively of the guide channel, if viewed in longitudinal direction of said vehicle, is configured such that the C-shaped turning area is disposed outside of said guide channel or in a widened end area of said guide channel in the completely closed position and completely opened position respectively” for the purpose of reducing frictional forces when starting to move the sliding door from the completely closed or opened position to another position to thereby prevent an undesired blockage of the sliding door and to enable use of electric drive motors of lower output power. It is respectfully noted that all cited references are completely silent about this aspect of the invention as claimed by amended claim 29.

New claim 30 is also directed to the embodiment shown in Fig. 3 of this application and further specifies that the C-shaped turning area (portion) of the cable guide assembly is firmly guided by a middle section (so-called central guide area) between the top and bottom guide section of the guide channel. More specifically, the C-shaped turning area is guided in contact to side walls of the guide channels formed by the protruding portions of this middle section protruding into the guide channel. It is respectfully noted that all citations cited are completely silent about such a configuration of a guide channel for guiding a cable guide assembly.

The same arguments as set forth above with regard to new claim 29 also apply to new claim 31.

With regard to new claim 32 (previous claim 12) it is respectfully noted that, as discussed above, Hisano is completely silent about providing a guide channel “wherein a width of the cavity in the vicinity of the sidewalls corresponds to a transverse dimension of the cable guide assembly in the transverse direction of the vehicle”. To the contrary, Hisano only discloses a “containing recess” of a width clearly exceeding any possible transverse dimension of the cable guide assembly.

With regard to new claims 33 to 35 (previous claims 14 to 16) it is respectfully noted that Suzuki et al. is completely silent about a guide channel “further including a sliding element guide for guiding a sliding element”. To the contrary, according to Suzuki et al. the sliding element 25 is guided in a longitudinal slot disposed at the bottom of the door. As a guide channel in the sense of this application is neither disclosed by Suzuki et al. nor by the other citations, such a sliding element would inevitably be visible at the bottom of the sliding door, which necessarily deteriorates the outer appearance of such a sliding door and makes the sliding element and its corresponding guidance also prone to mechanical damage resulting in possible blockage of the sliding door. In contrast, according to new claim 33, the guide channel further includes such a sliding element, which can hence be covered by a sidewall of the guide channel.

With regard to new claim 35 (previous claim 16) it is respectfully noted Kobayashi et al. discloses a completely different configuration where the cable guide assembly is only pivotable in a direction transverse to the sliding plane on displacing the sliding door into the sliding plane but that does not comprise a first section that is moved only in the sliding plane including the longitudinal direction of the vehicle on moving the sliding door. Furthermore, the pivot bearing disclosed by Kobayashi et al. is fixed, i.e. not movable in a longitudinal direction of the vehicle, and there would be no motivation for a person skilled in the art to combine the teachings of the other three citations with that of Kobayashi et al. to finally arrive at the device as claimed by new claim 35. Even if so,

due to the fundamentally different configuration of the device disclosed by Kobayashi et al. et the person skilled in the art would only consider flipping the top section ("first section") of the cable guide assembly but not the bottom section ("second section") of the cable guide assembly.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the presently claimed invention would not have been obvious over the prior art, and in particular would not have been obvious over the disclosures of Tsunoda et al. in view of Hisano, with or without the disclosures of Kobayashi et al. and/or Suzuki et al. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the claim rejections.

Conclusion

In the event issues arise as a result of the filing of this paper, or remain in the prosecution of this application, Applicant requests that the Examiner telephone the undersigned attorney to expedite allowance of the application. If any additional fees are required for the filing of this paper, the Commissioner is authorized to charge those fees to Deposit Account #18-0988, Docket No. BLASP4283US.

Respectfully submitted,

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